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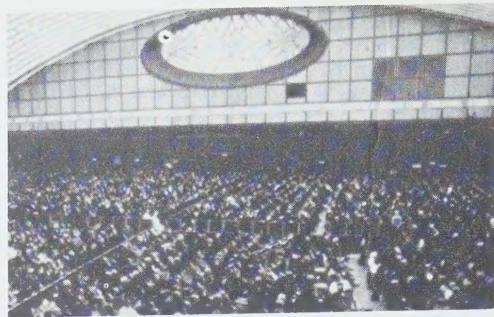
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THE PRIEST TODAY - THE RELIGIOUS TODAY

Theme of an International Congress

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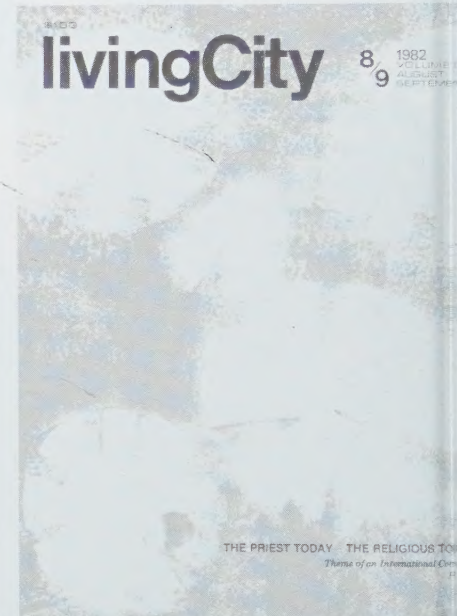
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COVER DESIGN: "Flowers" by Lucia Colella

We would like to call our readers' attention to the fact that this issue of *Living City* is for August-September. The next number will be coming to you in October 1982.

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The priest today

Compiled by
Guglielmo Boselli
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The religious today

The first International Congress for Priests and Religious associated with the Focolare Movement took place in the Vatican's Pope Paul VI Audience Hall on April 30th. Pope John Paul II addressed the more than 7,000 participants during the largest Eucharistic concelebration in the history of the Church.

"The largest Eucharistic celebration in the history of the Church": with these words, the *Roman Observer* described the Mass which Pope John Paul II celebrated with many bishops and 6,000 priests at the first International Congress of Priests and Religious associated with the Focolare Movement. It was the extraordinary highlight to a day which had brought together priests from over seventy nations and religious from more than sixty orders and congregations around the world. Priests from the Orthodox Church, from the Anglican Church, Lutheran pastors and hundreds of theology students filled to capacity the Vatican's Pope Paul VI Audience Hall on April 30, a "gathering" of 7,000 participants in all.

They had come together as Father Antonio Petrilli explained in his welcoming address to the Pope, "to share in a day of unity and communion, and to receive the words of the Holy Father."

More than 4,500 priests belonging to the "Movement for Priests" represented the 10,000 priests who are part of the Focolare Movement. Some of them, with the approval of their bishops, form 224 diocesan priests' Focolare communities. Others who are parish priests have helped establish groups who live the spirituality of unity in the parish. They serve as "leaven" in 700 parishes. Each year, hundreds of priests participate in the Movement's Seminars for Priests held in Frascati, Italy. The "Gens," students from diocesan seminaries who count among its members 3,000 seminarians from 300 major and

minor seminaries, also attended the Congress in large numbers.

The "Movement for the Religious," which includes approximately 10,000 members from some eighty institutions, was represented by more than 1,500 priests and hundreds of "Gen Re," brothers and seminarians from various religious orders who are also associated with the Focolare Movement.

"The spirituality of the Work of Mary,"¹ Father Petrilli said, "being Marian and community oriented, appeared to be, from the beginning, particularly valid for the spiritual life of many religious because of the strong emphasis on God-Love, of the central place given to the cross, of the more profound life of mutual love, of the evangelical life that it demands and the whole patrimony of ideas that it offers. Hence the urge felt by many to live out "one's consecration to God with even deeper commitment in one's own community and religious family."

Unity has been established then, or reinforced, not only in monasteries, religious houses and seminaries, but also among priests of different religious families. The opportunity to deepen this unity is provided through regular meetings and seminars offered by the Movement for the Religious each year in Grottaferrata, Italy.

The International Congress of April 30 focused on a theme of utmost interest in this post-Vatican II period: "The Priest Today, the Religious Today." In the opening address, Chiara Lubich, foundress and president of the Focolare Movement, defined the priest today as the "man of dialogue." The reli-



Many bishops attended the Congress: Archbishop Augustin Mayer, secretary for the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes (above left), spoke on "The Religious Today." He emphasized that renewal of the Church and of religious families requires a return to the spirit of the founders who "understood how to read the signs of the times... and opened new paths... They were extraordinary witnesses of the love of God and of service without bounds." The Church, he said, "sees with immense joy the development of an always deeper understanding, esteem, collaboration, fraternal communion, unity among the various religious families."

gious of each order was described as someone bearing witness to a particular "word" of the Gospel and composing with all the others the entire Gospel.

Archbishop Augustin Mayer, Secretary for the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, presented a talk on the theme "The Religious Today" and Bishop Klaus Hemmerle of Aachen, Germany, spoke on "The Priest Today." Father Silvano Cola and Father Andrea Balbo, who are coordinators for the Movement for Priests and the Movement for the Religious, respectively, presented the contribution which priests and religious who share in the spirituality of the Focolare Movement wish to offer within the Church today.

The day's highlight: the concelebration of Mass with the Holy Father. Pope John Paul II, in his homily, delivered a message which provided direction not only for priests and religious who participate



Bishop Klaus Hemmerle of Aachen, Germany (above) spoke on "The Priest Today." Humanity in crisis, he said, searches for Jesus and for those priests whose lives... bear witness to Jesus' message with their own experience. Priests must be close to the community... understanding and making themselves one with all. Their forgetting themselves totally for the sake of others, their simplicity as Christians among Christians, will truly represent the love of Christ only if priests, remaining close to humanity in all humility, will carry within themselves the greatness of their mission and of the sacramental character of their ministry. People will believe in Jesus when they see the Church live unity, being one as the Father and Son are one. This then is the true function of the priest: to be the living bond of unity, to guide the Church in the service of her mission. But the priest cannot carry out such a service of unity, for unity, if he remains isolated. Only by living in unity with his bishop and in unity with all priests, can he reveal that it is not he who works and speaks, but the Lord."

in the life of the Movement, but for all in the Church.

He emphasized two points in the spirituality of the Movement which together provide for spiritual renewal: the love for Jesus Crucified and Forsaken, and unity in love: the first as the key to the fulfillment of the second.

Concrete experiences of life, alternating with brief mimes presented

by the seminarians, were offered during the day. They spoke of unity established between pastors and assistant pastors, between elderly priests and young ones, of unity lived in rectories, monasteries, seminaries. Ecumenical experiences were also part of the program.

1) The official name of the Focolare Movement.

"The man of dialogue"

We reprint in its entirety the talk which Chiara Lubich, founder and president of the Focolare Movement, delivered at the International Congress for Priests and Religious.



My dear Priests and Religious:

The day dedicated to the priests and religious of the Focolare Movement has arrived. This gathering has been prepared for the glory of God and for the greater good of the Church, as a moment in which to reflect, in fraternal communion, on the mission of the priest and religious in the Church today.

"The Priest Today, the Religious Today" is, in fact, the title given to your meeting which is held beside St. Peter's Dome, in the place closest to the heart of Our Holy Father John Paul II, the one person on earth who today most fulfills in himself the charism of the priesthood.

"The priest today."

Dear priests, certainly you have not come here to ask yourselves if, in our day and age, the priestly vocation is still relevant. It is only too clear, it is only too evident, that for as long as Christ is relevant, the vocation of those called to continue his ministry on earth cannot be subject to the passing of time.

Nor have you come primarily to seek an answer to the anguished, at times burning question of the identity of the priest.

Nor are you meeting here solely to consider the general situation of the priest in the world today — what difficulties he may have and what are the reasons behind the crises he might experience.

The reason for this meeting is a different one: to join together in mutual love (for where two or more are united in the name of Christ, Jesus himself is in their midst¹) in order to understand with his light how he wants his priest to be today.

Undoubtedly the priest must be, in every age, as Christ has always wanted him to be. This does not exclude, however, that particular characteristics should be emphasized



mission of evangelizing, are deeply involved in this.

The priest today cannot but be "a man of dialogue."

We could say that this is the hour of dialogue. We are all called to dialogue, and priests, who have the which are called for by the present world situation — in its moral, cultural, social, political and religious aspects. These are characteristics indicated by the varying signs of the times, as well as by the needs and demands of the people, through whom God often speaks.

In short: God wants his priest today to be as he always wanted him to be, but in accordance with the directives given by the Church who interprets all these signs.

Today the Church through the Council, for example, asks for a universal vision of things. She invites people to enlarge their hearts to horizons as vast as the earth itself. The action of the Holy Spirit in the Church is characterized today by a great openness. Doors which up to now have been kept half-closed, have suddenly been thrown wide open, revealing undreamed of vistas. The Holy Spirit today is decisively calling priests and lay people to universal brotherhood, and this is why the word "dialogue" is so timely.

Dialogue among Catholics, among Christians of the various Churches

Opposite page: Chiara Lubich while she is addressing the 7,000 participants. Above: Religious of different orders participating at the Congress.

and ecclesial communities; dialogue with faithful of other religions, and with all people of good will.

Dear priests — you belong to the Focolare Movement, which we call and consider to be the Work of Mary. Mary has drawn you too, gently but decisively to this way, her "way of life." This is how the Holy Father called it.

And it is Mary, I believe, who also through this Work of hers, can give you the opportunity to fulfill yourselves in accordance with the needs of the times. At her side, in her company you will be able to open yourselves to that universal dialogue that our times demand.²

You know that our spirituality rests on two fundamental points: on the one hand, Jesus Crucified who cries, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"³ On the other, unity.⁴

But who is Jesus Crucified and Forsaken if not the one who opened up for all the way to universal dialogue? Is it not there at the culmination of his passion⁵ in that total exterior and interior annihilation,⁶ that he fulfills himself as mediator between man and God? Is it not there on the cross that he presents himself to the Father as priest and victim for all humanity?

Is not that divine spiritual wound that opened in his heart — when heaven itself was closed to him — a wide open door through which man can finally unite himself to God and God to him?

Because human beings, through Jesus Crucified, were able to restore dialogue with God, a dialogue among them was also born: Jesus Crucified is the bond of unity also among human beings.

Unity then is the fruit of dialogue. Unity is dialogue fully lived out.

The fundamental dialogue to which the priest is called — whether he be a diocesan priest or a religious — is the dialogue with *the Priest* par excellence, his Master and Lord.⁷

In virtue of his priestly ordination, a priest continues Christ's mission and, as his minister, acts in a particular way "in persona Christi."

But this does not fully express the plan that Jesus had in mind for his priests.

While it is true that in speaking to them, Jesus used those wonderful words which invested them with his very own powers, thus communicating to them a very high dignity, when speaking about them to the Father, Jesus prayed in this way: "Father, that they may be one even as we are one. I in them and you in me."⁸

Jesus is present in his priests, as he is in all Christians, through grace. We know this. But this divine life can and must grow until it reaches perfection through love.

"I in them."

Jesus wants to be in his priests, he wants to live in them not only by the power of the charism that ordination confers upon them, but also through the love that can make them perfect in unity.⁹

Where will the priests of the Work of Mary find this divine opportunity of having Christ live within them more and more fully if not in the daily imitation of Jesus Crucified, lived moment by moment in his total annihilation? Where, if not by embracing Jesus himself in the big and small trials of life, in the more or less dark moments of it? Where, if not through constant prayer and faithful meditation? Where, if not by nourishing themselves with the Eucharist that deifies, with the Word that sanctifies, and with fraternal communion? Until when, consumed with zeal in apostolic service, straining ahead toward the goal, totally transformed into other Christs by the Spirit, they will be able to open themselves to the Father with the loving word "Abba."

This is the dialogue par excellence to which the priest — every priest on earth — is called.

This is the height he must reach.

This is what God wants from his priests, because when the Spirit will be able to pronounce in their hearts the word "Father"¹⁰ they will then be able to call — in all truth and with its fullest effects — all people on earth their brothers and sisters.

The priest is at the service of the Church.

The Church! What is the Church if not the stupendous reality that Pope Paul VI described as "charity," as "unity"?¹¹

The Work of Mary would like to repeat of her priests the words St. Ignatius of Antioch gave to the Ephesians: "Your rightly famous presbytery . . . worthy of God, is harmoniously united to the bishop as the strings to the harp."

In order that the Church may become always more this charity, this unity — also before the eyes of the world — the first communion which the priest is called to carry out here on earth is the dialogue and communion with the Pope.

Moreover, this unity is a characteristic of the Catholic members of the Focolare Movement as it is of its priests: it is a profound, deeply-felt, filial unity with the Pope in whom they recognize the "Sweet Christ on earth."¹²

Why?

Certainly it is because Mary is present in this Work, and no one more than she, with the exception of Jesus, knows who Peter is.

Peter "is the firm and most solid rock upon which the Savior has built the Church."¹³ The Pope is the guarantee of the unity of the Church. He is the person who has the greatest opportunity to love and therefore to engage in dialogue, to unite. "He must be first in loving Christ in order to be first in governing the Church..."¹⁴

Thus, there must be unity with him and total obedience.¹⁵

The second dialogue that the priest of the Focolare Movement or Work of Mary is called to hold, to live and to intensify is the dialogue with his own bishop who, more than anyone else, has the grace to understand the needs of the local Church of which he is the foundation and shepherd.

It is in loving his own bishop sincerely, it is in making himself completely one with his bishop, it is in offering himself, available and obedient to him as Jesus was to his Father, that the priest will understand how he can better exercise his ministry and, with the bishop, carry the burdens of the diocese.

The Work of Mary would like to repeat of her priests the words St. Ignatius of Antioch gave to the

Ephesians: "Your rightly famous presbytery ... worthy of God, is harmoniously united to the bishop as the strings to the harp."¹⁶

Jesus Crucified and Forsaken is also, for our priests, the way to unity with all those who have been given the same responsibility.

The priests of the Work of Mary are called to open themselves up to a dialogue with other priests, particularly with those who are lonely or poor, with those who suffer. They wish to establish with each one a constructive relationship, a spiritual communion, and, as much as possible, a communion of goods: they wish to become one heart and one soul. This will be for the good of the entire diocese.

In fact, when speaking to bishops who are friends of the Movement, the Holy Father affirmed that full co-responsibility with others will in no way cause them to neglect the flock directly entrusted to them, or the task which has been specifically assigned to them. On the contrary, this co-responsibility carries in itself greater guarantees of being fully in harmony with Christ in reaching what, in the hour of his passion, he most longed for: "May they all be one."¹⁷ This holds true for priests as well. In fact, in the same talk, the Pope said: "That priests may be one among themselves..."¹⁸ With unity among priests, with the presence of the Risen Lord in their midst (who promised to be with all Christians, but especially with those who proclaim the Gospel, until the end of time)¹⁹ — parishes will benefit as will seminaries, schools, missions and all apostolic works.

Again, this unity among priests is a guarantee of the future of the Church.

To whom do these young men — whom God may have called to the same vocation — look in order to understand what their future may

be at the service of God and humanity? They see in the present-day priests what they are called to become, and often they feel at home with them as if with their future family.²⁰

It is priests united in this way, with the kingdom of God in their midst — with all the consequences that this implies — who can show the truth of Jesus' words to Peter: "Moreover, everyone who has given up home, brothers or sisters, father or mother, wife or children or property for my sake will receive many times as much and inherit everlasting life."²¹

Once this unity among priests is assured, Jesus Crucified is the 'way' to dialogue between priests and the faithful. He who, rich as he was, made himself poor and "emptied himself and took the form of a slave,"²² can teach priests the authentic Christian attitude towards all those entrusted to their care: it is one of service.

This Congress takes as its symbol "the washing of the feet": Jesus although Lord and Master, washed the feet of the Apostles. This is Christ; and this is how he wants his priests to be. He wants them to serve, making themselves one with everyone, in all things except sin... in order to win to Christ as many as possible.²³

His priests are to begin a dialogue with each neighbor, understanding and taking everyone into their own hearts.

If their priestly service will have the support of this ardent love, this service of the heart, priests will witness, in that portion of the Church entrusted to them, the wonder which the Holy Spirit is today calling Christians to reveal to the world: the royal priesthood: faithful who are truly convinced that the duties of the faith are not fulfilled by the Sunday obligation. On the contrary,

they live their baptism, dying moment by moment in Christ, out of love for him and one another, and rising in him to new life.

"That priests 'may be one' among themselves" — the Pope said. But he added "and with the faithful; that associations within the parish and the diocese 'may be one'..."²⁴

May be one.

Never as in our times when the Church must look beyond herself to all Christians, to those who have different beliefs or who do not believe at all, does the missionary mandate of the Fourth Gospel come to the fore. John expresses it in the following way: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Jesus gave this mandate immediately after he had announced to the disciples the new law.²⁵

Today Christians are called to evangelize also in this way: by loving one another and by presenting to others the experience of their new life. It cannot help but touch others, surprise and provoke questions. And thus dialogue flourishes.

Other Christians.

The Work of Mary does not belong only to the Catholic world. Mary brought it to life for Christians of other Churches as well. And together we form one reality, even with the limits which the still existing divisions involve. Nevertheless, in our profound unity, we can see foreshadowed in a certain way what will come to be.

Who urges all the Christian members of the Movement to dialogue with one another, to foster, day by day, that communion among them which is already possible, to establish among all the presence of Jesus which our common baptism guarantees? Who urges Catholic priests to unite, as much as possible, with priests and ministers of other traditions?

It is Jesus Crucified who, in his cry of abandonment, took upon himself all the divisions of the world, all the consequences of our sin.

It is because of Jesus Crucified that we search out one another, that we love one another, that we hope, and do not desist, even when the endeavor appears arduous.

He who, in the heart of history, paid for every division in the world, including the division among us Christians, has not yet seen all the fruit of his immense suffering.

Thus it is he who spurs us on to sow, even though we will not be the ones to reap. It is he who urges us to look at the good of the Church, which will continue on after us; he who convinces us that if no one begins, and perseveres, no one will conclude.

Jesus Forsaken and the other religions.

The Son of God paid no small price to make himself one with us out of love. If anyone "lived the other," it was he. And behold him become man: Jesus — born like all men. He was a Jew among Jews, who lived, worked, wept, who was tired, who suffered in body and soul, who offered to God also the terrible sense of feeling abandoned by him. He experienced annihilation and death. In this way, he immersed himself in every level of man's experience, to gather into his heart all mankind — bringing all to the Father.

It is to him that we look — we of the Work of Mary, and the priests, the first apostles and missionaries — in order to know how to bring God to those who do not yet know him, or who believe they know other gods.

"We must make ourselves one" with them, we must take on the diverse cultures which are often so rich, steeped in centuries-old tradi-

*"Unity then
is the fruit of dialogue.
Unity
is dialogue
fully lived out."*

tions; thus enabling the good news to be heard also in these cultures.

Jesus Crucified, in his cry of abandonment, then reminds us of all who do not believe there is a God, of materialists, terrorists, sinners, robbers, murderers...

It is love for Jesus Forsaken which gives the priest new impetus to know how and in what ways to dialogue with them: Jesus came as a doctor for the sick.

"The priest today, the religious today."

"The religious today."

If Jesus is the Incarnate Word, the Church is the Gospel spread out in time and space.

Christ founded the Church by sending the Holy Spirit and, throughout the centuries he continues to guide it by serving, strengthening, comforting, healing, animating and adorning it with his Spirit.

Hence, from time to time, he pronounces a word, embodying it in a person chosen by him. This is a founder or foundress. Founders, with the families born of them through the Spirit, give life to new springtimes in the Church.

Thus the Church is like an immense garden where all kinds of flowers — the rarest and most common, the richest and simplest — give off their fragrance.

These are the religious families, the Orders, the movements which have a two-fold task: they are to re-establish in their own times the life of the early Christian community and, through their own lives, remind the world of a word of Jesus, of an attitude or event in his life, because that particular moment in history needs to hear it repeated.

And so there are those who remind the world of Jesus' poverty, others, of his humility, his purity, or his simplicity; his meekness, strength or obedience. There are those who relive his total annihila-

tion, or who continue his life of prayer, his preaching, his missionary zeal; some who recall Jesus' passion, his blood, his most sacred body; and still others, his heart, his most beloved countenance, his wounds, his resurrection... There are those who particularly recognize him in those who are deprived of their rights, or exiled, hungry, ignorant, imprisoned, dying...

In different styles of Christian life, each authentic and complete, we find men and women who, as specialists in the Gospel, offer to the world a variety of spiritual remedies.

Do we need these persons also in our day and age? If the answer is yes, what, in our humble opinion, should these servants of religion, these religious, be like today?

Our world today — even in those nations that have come into contact with Christianity — is not as it was in the past when, notwithstanding the existing errors, society was basically Christian.

Today, the advancing secularization and the chilling materialistic trends existing in the world tend to suffocate and at times even destroy religion in some peoples.

For many, God is nothing more than a memory, or he is not even known. The priest, the religious are not respected; on the contrary, sometimes they are ridiculed; at times, even exiled. The word of God is ignored; his law, forgotten.

In certain places and for various peoples, it is as though everything had been destroyed, as though everything had to be started anew.

Thus, it is necessary to present Christianity in its most authentic form, men and women are needed who answer the demands of the Gospel in a total way, who follow Jesus also in his counsels so that, doubly bound to him, they will remind all to live at least his commands. There is an urgent need for spiritual 'powerhouses,' people who



Priests and pastors of various Christian Churches participated in the Congress. Anglican priest Stuart Burns (left) told of his meeting with the Movement: "I met the Work of Mary twelve years ago. Since that time, a deep relationship of unity has been growing among the Anglicans who share this spirituality, as well as with many Catholic priests. We have understood that we participate in the same Christ, a participation which is a much deeper reality than the division between our Churches. Grounded in this fundamental unity, we can look at our differences, recognizing in some the cross of Christ, in others, not obstacles to unity, but true gifts we can share with one another..."

Albrecht Weber is an Evangelical pastor from Cologne. His experience was told by his friend, Father Wilfried Hagemann (right), a Catholic priest.

teach his doctrine, revealing in their own lives its every detail and people whose lives explain it in all his words, acting as loudspeakers for the world.

And today when it is necessary to sew together with infinite patience the torn unity of Christians, we can see the need for places to which all followers of Christ can look, practical models where unity is lived moment by moment with all its problems, struggles and victories.²⁶

In these times we meet face to face with other religions which have endured the centuries. They have endured because they are based on naturally Christian principles and are often proclaimed and furthered by men and women who have considered religion to be a means of purification, of sanctification, and who know renunciation, mortification and self-annihilation to be simple requisites of a pure heart. In these times the Church therefore

cannot do without the religious, these sons and daughters of hers who continually strive towards perfection as the heavenly Father is perfect.²⁷

Mary, through the Work of Mary, contributes today, with a spirituality which is all hers, to make these "flowers" ever more beautiful in the eyes of God and of the world. The Virgin does this by making the warmth of charity — which brings forth life — shine in many religious. At the same time, she invites them to contemplate the particular words that the Spirit taught them to embody, in the light of Jesus Crucified and Forsaken — in whom every virtue has reached its perfection.

Who could ever reach his poverty, take on his obedience, measure his patience, reach his humility? Who knows his strength? Who could imagine his confidence? Who could discern the abyss of his mercy or imitate his magnanimity? Who can love with his love?

In his light many religious rediscover, at its roots, the charism of their own religious families. They understand the gift which God has made them, and find a new, filial love for their founders, with the desire to understand from them God's will. Having found the Father anew, they feel they are all brothers; they read the Rule with new eyes and deepen their unity with their superiors. A new profound unity is born — one filled with gratitude: unity with the hierarchy and, in particular, with the Holy Father, who because of his charism, takes in all the charisms of the Church.

Thus, Jesus and the Church are better served today also through the religious.

Now, let us conclude.

My dear priest — diocesan and religious — there is one more dialogue — a special one — which every priest of Christ is called to develop;

there is a unique unity that he is called to accomplish. It is a dialogue, a unity that the priest who is linked with the Work of Mary is doubly invited to develop: it is the dialogue with Mary, the mother of Jesus and the mother of each one of his priests.²⁸

"...and the disciple took her to his own home."²⁹

Dying, Jesus turned to his mother and, indicating John, he said to her, "Woman, behold your Son."³⁰ Then looking at John, he added, "Behold your mother."³¹

We know it: at that moment, in John, Jesus was entrusting all of us Christians to Mary.

But we cannot overlook the fact that John was a priest.

Therefore, on that day, priests — in the person of John — received from Jesus a directive, an invitation, a command: to see Mary as their mother, to take her with them.

John with Mary: this is the Christian priesthood.

Priests should remember this. But even if sadly enough they forget to take Mary with them, the mother of Jesus will never forget to fulfill this desire of her dying Son.

Mary is the immeasurable help that Jesus has given to priests for their service to the Church.

There is no doubt that John was able to reach such heights and contemplate the Word that is with God, the Word who is God, because the mother of God lived with him.³²

This extraordinary life together, this communion with the person who kept and pondered all those things in her heart³³ opened his eyes to see. He was able to see the Church, its future — its struggles and victories — because Mary, the model of the Church, was with him.

The Virgin is the "prototype" of the Church, and each priest called to build the Church, will know how to best carry out his task in the presence of Mary.

If priests live in communion with Mary, she, mother of unity, will reveal to them how to see love established in and among hearts; how to build the Body of Christ according to that supreme, eternal dialogue of love: the Most Holy Trinity.

Mary is there beside each priest. Her presence needs to be discovered. One way for our priests to do this is to welcome her ever more fully in this ideal of life, which is a gift she offers them; it would be to accept her invitation to identify with her Son, to relive her Son, the Crucified One, the Forsaken One. She too accepted and relived Him when — in her immense desolation — she had to lose Jesus, when she saw him being replaced by one of us, by a priest. In this way she 'paid' with her second 'yes,' her second maternity, that of the Church.

It is with her, mother of the Church, mother of unity, that our priests, our religious will fulfill themselves as authentic 'men of dialogue' today. It is with her that they will become builders of unity so that all may be one."³⁴

1) cf. Mt. 18:20. 2) cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 92. 3) Mt. 27:46; Mark 15:34. 4) cf. Jn. 17:21. 5) cf. Romano Guardini, *The Lord*. 6) John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*. 7) cf. Pope Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, 41. 8) Jn. 17:22-23. 9) cf. Jn. 17:23. 10) cf. Gal. 4:6. 11) *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, Vol. VIII, p. 1311. 12) Catherine of Siena, *Letter 185 in Epistolaria*, I (Alba, 1966) p. 43. 13) Gregory of Nyssa (PG 46,733), *Eulogy II on St. Stephen* (PG 46,729-733). 14) *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, (1965), Vol. III, p. 1111. 15) cf. Pope Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, 64,66. 16) Ignatius, *To the Ephesians* 4,1 (PG 5, 648), ECF p. 89. 17) Jn. 17:21. 18) Pope John Paul II, *Roman Observer*, English Ed., March 8, 1982. 19) cf. Mt. 28:20. 20) Pope John Paul II, *Insegnamenti I* (1978), p. 117. 21) Mt. 19:29. 22) Phil. 2:7. 23) cf. 1 Cor. 9:19. 24) Pope John Paul II, *Roman Observer*, English Ed., March 8, 1982. 25) Jn. 13:34-35; cf. H. van den Busche, *Giovanni, Assisi, 1970*, p. 452-454. 26) cf. Pope John Paul II, *Supplemento all'Osservatore Romano* n. 40, p. 9. 27) cf. Mt. 5:48. 28) cf. Pope John Paul II, *Insegnamenti, II/1* (1979), pp. 879-880. 29) Jn. 19:27. 30) Jn. 19:26. 31) Jn. 19:27. 32) cf. Ambrose "De Instit. Virg." 7,50 (PL 16, 319). 33) cf. Luke 2:19. 34) Jn. 17:21.

An answer for priests

An answer for religious

by Gino Lubich

by Guglielmo Boselli

I do not know exactly how many Catholic priests there are in the world (I believe a little more than 250,000), nor the number of religious of all the various orders and congregations (I suppose a few less). I think, however, that 10,000 of one and 10,000 of the other would offer a unique reservoir of existential experiences, two noteworthy samples to help sketch a reliable picture of the human situation and of the psychological state of priests in an age in which all values — in particular religious — seem to be crumbling.

The data which this "test case" could provide seemed even more substantial given the fact that this "sample" of 10,000 priests was comprised of priests who carry out their ministry all over the world, and that of the 10,000 religious from approximately eighty different religious families: a representation, therefore, practically universal.

These then were the first considerations which caught my journalistic interest, prompting me to attend the International Congress of Priests and Religious associated with the Focolare Movement. This first Congress of its kind was held in the Vatican's Pope Paul VI Audience Hall, April 30. It would be hard to find another such firsthand opportunity to sound out in depth, and on such a vast scale, the ecclesiastical world.

My expectations were not disappointed. From the very first talk by Father Silvano Cola, who works for the Movement for Priests at its central office, everything was spelled out quite clearly, his analysis lucid and straightforward. Ever since the world, under the influence of illuminism, subjectivism, liberalism, Marxism, Freudism has moved further and further away from its religious roots, it has been splitting into two separate worlds which no longer communicate with each other: the

world of the laity and the ecclesial one. And when the lay world began to supplant the Church even in the works of charity and social assistance, the priests found themselves "displaced," as though "strangers in this earthly city," suffering a severe crisis of identity.

"I know what happens to most of us," said Father Cola, speaking specifically about the diocesan priests, "on the outside we appear sure of ourselves, but inside we are hesitant, perhaps anxiety-ridden because rationalism has infiltrated our minds, as has sociologism and psychologism, and perhaps even naturalism. We no longer know why we observe the vow of celibacy, and we doubt its historical validity. We do know that from the time of Jesus to

that of the last Council, we priests have always considered ourselves one body and one soul with the bishop and among ourselves. Yet, many of us are dying of loneliness, and many priests experience the tragedy of not being able to communicate with their own bishop or with their fellow priests, either on the spiritual level or in the sharing of material goods.

"We have placed all the emphasis on the liturgy and perhaps on the unity manifested in the concelebration of Mass. Yet, the presence of Jesus in the liturgical celebration — the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist which should be the cause as well as the effect of unity in the whole Church — is not carried over into our everyday lives.

Pope John Paul II speaking with Father Andrea Balbo (center) and Father Silvano Cola, coordinators of the Movement for the Religious and the Movement for Priests, respectively.



We risk not being true to the words given us at our ordination, 'agite quod tractatis,' (translate your teaching into action) because in the liturgy we represent a sacramental reality which we do not live up to in our personal relationships with others.

"Thus we are losing the sense of our vocation and perhaps the sense of life as well; and since we do believe in God, we cry out in our loneliness: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'"

I don't remember having heard before a clearer explanation of the plight of priests today. I was intimately touched by their suffering. Yet this same priest had told us as he approached the microphone: "I cannot say I have much human optimism, but I do have a divine optimism."

Where did it come from, where could he draw the strength for such optimism? It was at this point that my curiosity (which, prompted perhaps by my professional instinct, is usually more apt to probe into a crisis than to seek a way of solving it) was attracted by the "positive" that was going to come.

The 10,000 priests who had represented a "test case" of the human and spiritual suffering which they shared in common with all their fellow priests, now became a test case for the optimism professed by Father Cola. It was an optimism backed by concrete experiences shared that day which demonstrated that, in spite of everything, it was possible to overcome the crisis.

The key to the solution lies precisely in Christ's cry: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" repeated today by many priests in their solitude. It has opened to thousands upon thousands of them the door to the "fundamental meaning of life"; to the discovery that we "give up our life" in order to *be*.

"It was through this experience," said Father Cola, "that I understood what the priesthood is. Precisely through his sense of abandonment and death on the cross, Jesus generated the Church, making the sin and the suffering of the whole world his own. I said to myself — if this is true, then the division among Christians is mine; mine any lack of communication between priests and bishops, between priest and priest, between priest and laity. The lack of understanding of priestly celibacy, the existentialist lie between what is taught and what is lived; the loneliness of the priests — all of this is mine.

"But all this suffering is Jesus; it is 'his' suffering, the priestly suffering itself which, when accepted and loved, generates the Church. For this alone we must be divinely optimistic because if we relive the Forsaken One in ourselves, if before the Father's silence which makes us feel unfulfilled and awkward, we respond with belief in his love, we, too, in Jesus, participate in generating the new creation."

Is this asceticism? It certainly is. But an asceticism immersed in the human element of life, transforming it in all its aspects. It was the impact of their meeting with the Focolare Movement that first prompted many priests and religious to look into their lives, and eventually led to the formation of this "Movement for Priests" in the Sixties.

Father Silvano continued by saying, "We looked at one another and said: We too can love and be ready to give our lives for one another, and thus earn the presence of Jesus in our midst, as he himself has promised. We tried it, and it was a discovery, because never before had we consciously lived it, never had we 'taken advantage' of his promise, thus depriving ourselves and the

faithful of the light of the Risen Mediator in our midst.

It is a very simple reality for all we have to do is love; yet it is extremely profound because it is the fulfillment of the priestly vocation. Actually, it is not me, but Jesus, whom the world needs; it is not me, but Jesus, whom the world will follow."

To be one — this is the secret Father Cola explained. "To discover Jesus in the bishop; to love him, to be one with him. How can we expect the faithful to listen to us, as though they were listening to Jesus, if we ourselves do not always do so when listening to the Pope or to our bishop?"

There can be no love, however, where there is no spiritual and material communion. "But when my soul is no longer mine because I am sharing it, and my earthly possessions are no longer mine because I put everything in common, even the economic problems of the clergy are solved as though by magic — not by force of law but by the all-embracing power of love. And the same happens to the problem of loneliness."

For the priests, too, to live unity means "forming a family," bound together by that human-divine love which satisfies and surpasses every human need for affection. "Where priests live together in this way, there are no more crises of celibacy, loneliness or anxiety because they live in the Risen One, in another dimension. And if we are a family, we can also solve the problem of the aged priests for it is absurd and contrary to Jesus' commandment to allow a parish priest, because he is old, to live in an old age home, when he could very well stay in the parish with the new pastor, because he is a member of the family, and has the right to be loved and attended to,

(continued on page 28)

"Aflame with the love of Christ"

The homily delivered by Pope John Paul II to the 7,000 participants of the International Congress during the concelebration of the Mass.



"All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren" (Acts 1:14).

These words from the first Scripture reading, my dear brothers in the priesthood, well suit our meeting today, which takes place in the solemn but at the same time joyful framework of a Eucharistic celebration. This prayerful context, however, does not prevent me from greeting you very warmly, a greeting which I gladly extend to the Anglican ministers, Evangelical pastors, and Orthodox brothers of the Regensburg Institute, who are present at this rite, hoping that the day will soon arrive in which joint participation in the Eucharist will be possible.

I next thank your representatives for their addresses to me, and above all I express to you my profound happiness to celebrate this sacred Liturgy with you.

My joy is caused not only by the large number of you who have come to this unique meeting from many countries on the five continents, but it is also caused by deeper motives. In the first place, this uniquely priestly moment that we are living offers us the auspicious opportunity for reflecting on, as well as experiencing, the nature and duties of the priestly life, which has such a large degree of responsibility in the conscience and in the very structure of the Church as the People of God, body of Christ and temple of the Spirit. In the second place, even though it is not the first time, I am happy to meet with you again, diocesan priests and religious who belong to the Focolare Movement. This Movement is now widely spread, and I hope that it will work even harder for the rediscovery of authentic evangelical values within the Christian community, so as to



A view of the Vatican's Pope Paul VI Audience Hall during the concelebration of the Mass.

contribute to a revitalization of the baptismal identity and especially of the priestly identity.

I know that you have gathered together to reconsider the role of the ministerial priest. How must he be in order to serve the Church and humanity of today most effectively and according to God's plans? The question is very important, and the answer given to it certainly cannot be of trifling interest, either for the understanding of the priestly ministry or for the Christian life itself. Of great help in this reflection may be some large elements of the Gospel message which have also become cornerstones of the spirituality of the Focolare Movement. Thus it is that the Movement takes from the Gospel two fundamental poles: Jesus crucified and unity in charity, emphasizing them and applying them in renewed forms. In reality, no renewal is possible, not even a practical one, that is to say, of life and pastoral style, if it does not lead back to and if it is not solidly based on the essential elements of the Christian faith. No activity, and even more so, no activism can presume to be based on itself, just as no tree can live by pure indigenous power, but flourishes only in pro-

portion to the depth its roots have sunk into rich and fertile soil, or, as the Psalmist says, is firmly "planted by streams of water" (Ps. 1:3). This fertile soil, this life-giving water, is for you, for all of us, the constant contemplation of the central mystery of Revelation, object of the Church's faith, of her adoration and celebration, since it is the unprecedented motive of the redemption and therefore of the freedom and joy of every believer. It is the mystery of the unfathomable and incomparable love of God for mankind, for us, which has been manifested to us, or rather documented, by the Son's total gift of himself (cf. Jn. 3:16; Gal. 2:20).

A few days ago we celebrated the Paschal Mystery, and we still live liturgically the great themes, sublime and unfathomable, of the Son of God's extreme emptying of himself unto death, even death on the cross, later to be enthroned in the glory of God (cf. Phil. 2:6-11) and to pour out on us his life-giving Spirit (cf. Acts 2:33; 1 Cor. 15:45). Above all Christ's cross stands out before the gaze of our faith as the deeply felt demonstration, and how much more, of the boundless love with which God has redeemed us, forgiving our every infidelity and gather-

ing us into the intimacy of an unsuspected union with himself. Let us think how much that cost: the precious blood of Christ (cf. 1 Pt. 1:18-19), his cry, although trusting, of abandonment on the cross of his torment (cf. Mk. 15:34), and his death.

In the culmination of his suffering there is also the culmination of his love.

So, here we discover a fundamental motive which becomes an inescapable urge to participate with all our hearts in the suffering of Jesus, crucified and abandoned, in order to live in intimate union with him in our personal lives, and above all in our daily ministerial tasks, as an expression of love for God and for the brethren (cf. Eph. 5:1-2). By embracing the suffering Jesus in our daily trials we are immediately united with the Spirit of the Risen One and his strengthening power (cf. Rom. 6:5; Phil. 1:19).

This is why, in the Letter addressed to all the priests of the Church for this past Holy Thursday, I wrote in the form of a prayer: "We were born... from the Body and Blood of your redeeming sacrifice... We were born at the Last Supper and, at the same time, at the foot of the Cross on Calvary" (no. 1). This fact of primary importance, which establishes our identity, invites and arouses every baptized person who has responded to the call to the ministerial priesthood to accord himself, rather, to conform himself always more to Christ, unique and eternal priest, and to find only in participation with him the true *raison d'être* of his life. And if this is already valid for every diocesan priest, so much more will religious see in the Crucified Jesus the root of all those virtues which must characterize their lives of special consecration, also in imitation of the charisms of their founders. For all, the iden-

tification with Jesus' absolute openness to the Father's will, so that the will of one coincided with that of the other, is all-important. "Lo, I have come to do your will... And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of Jesus Christ once and for all" (Hebr. 10:9-10). Only if the priest makes these words his own in all their concrete demands, and applies them to every sphere of his existence, will he be able to say in truth, as Vatican II expresses it, that he is acting *in persona Christi* (in the person of Christ) (*Lumen Gentium*, 10).

There is another component of evangelical spirituality which the Focolare Movement has adopted and which also merits our consideration: the union which Jesus asked to have with the Father before dying (cf. Jn. 17:21). It is through Christ's emptying of himself up to his abandonment and death that we have been made one with him and with each other (cf. Gal. 3:26-28; Eph. 2:14-18). And when Jesus commands us to love one another as he has loved us (cf. Jn. 15:12), he invites us to use his own measure as the measure of our love for each other; and it is precisely this which yields oneness, since love always unites those who share it. In oneness, then, there is felt in a very vivid way the presence of the Risen Christ in whom we are one. St. Leo the Great expressed it very well: "The Son of God assumed human nature with such an intimate union as to be the one and identical Christ not only in him who is the first-born of all creation, but also in all his saints" (*XII Discourse on the Passion*; PL LIV 355).

In the unity achieved in their priestly lives, priests find their true home, which grows and strengthens in communion with the bishops and the Pope. Gathered together in his name, Christ cannot but be in their midst (cf. Mt. 18:20), both to give

effectiveness to God's Word "that all have the right to search for from the lips of priests" (*Presb. Ord.* 4), and for a fruitful celebration of the Eucharist and of the other sacraments (cf. *Ibid.*, 5), and also, as pastors to bring together "the family of God as a fraternity inspired by unity" (*Ibid.*, 6). Religious, moreover, find in the practice of fraternal communion a closer relationship with their founders, and the possibility to make conspicuous the specific nature of their charisms (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 46). In this way, all together communicate to the world at least a ray of the superior and incomparable communion which binds the persons of the Holy Trinity to each other (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 24), in a mystery filled with life.

In the Gospel which was read in this Liturgy, we have listened to the words which Jesus on the cross addressed respectively to his own mother and to the disciple that he loved, entrusting each to the other

in an exchange of relationships both maternal and filial (cf. Jn. 19:26-27). It is known that your Movement is also called "Opera di Maria," and also for this reason one cannot fail to recall the position which the Mother of Jesus must have in the priestly life. The Gospel text just cited offers us the model for our devotion to Mary. "And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home" (Jn. 19:27). Can the same be said of us? Do we also welcome Mary into our homes? Indeed, we should grant her full rights in the home of our lives, of our faith, of our affections, of our commitments, and acknowledge the maternal role that is hers, that is to say, her function as guide, as adviser, as encourager, or even merely as a silent presence which at times may of itself be enough to infuse us with strength

The Pope greeting the participants of the Congress following the Mass.





The Holy Father with Chiara Lubich during the Congress.

and courage. On the other hand, the first Scripture reading reminded us that the first disciples, after Jesus' ascension, were gathered with "Mary, the Mother of Jesus" (Acts 1:14). She was, therefore, also a part of their community; in fact, perhaps it was she who gave it cohesion. And the fact that she is specified as "the Mother of Jesus" shows how closely she was linked to the figure of her son; it tells us that Mary recalls always and only the salvific value of what Jesus did, our only Savior, and on the other hand it likewise tells us that to believe in Jesus Christ cannot dispense us from including also in our act of faith the one who was his mother. In God's family, and so much more in the priestly family, Mary watches over the diversity of each one within the communion among all. And at the same time she can teach us to be open to the Holy Spirit, to share anxiously Christ's total dedication to the will of the Father; above all she can teach us to participate deeply in the passion of the Son and carry out our ministry with assured spiritual fruitfulness. "Behold, your mother!"

(Jn.19:27). Everyone feels that these words are addressed to him, and therefore draws faith and enthusiasm from them for an always more determined and serene journey along the committed road of his priestly life.

Beloved brothers, thank you for today's demonstration of communion which we shall soon strengthen through the sacramental communion which we shall enter into during this Liturgy realizing, indeed, all our unworthiness, but also exulting with the Lord himself. And in the light of the Eucharistic bond, I repeat to you the words of St. Paul to Timothy: "Rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of hands" (cf. 2 Tim. 1:6). And may the canticle of the Magnificat, which we read a short time ago, always rise to God from your inner being. Cultivate a solid spirituality, nourishing it by unceasing prayer, by never neglected serious study, by a truly lived brotherhood. Since you must give much to others, always try to replenish yourselves more with wisdom and grace. And may no one who approaches you go away disappointed, but may every-

one find in you light for his own intelligence, warmth for his own heart, support for his own journey.

May you always be brimming with joy for the gift of the priesthood in which Christ, the Eternal High Priest, has made you partakers. Always give a serene and clear-cut witness of an authentically evangelical life, so that the charism of your vocation may be an effective stimulus and fruitful source of other priestly and religious vocations which may flow from many hearts, especially those of young people, open and receptive to the invitation and to the call of Jesus, who is waiting for workers for the abundant harvest of the world.

And be assured that, for my part, I shall transform these good wishes into prayers and I commend you from my heart to the Lord so that he may "equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Hebr.13:21).

Later, before imparting the concluding blessing of the Mass, the Pope addressed his concelebrants with the following greeting.

I know that you come from various nations and from different continents. I therefore wish, before imparting my blessing, to express to all of you my greetings in some of the principal languages which you speak, as a sign of my affection for each of you.

To all among you who speak English I give a cordial and affectionate greeting. I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of hands. Be aflame with the love of Christ, and bring that warmth and light to all whom you meet, to all whom you serve as his representatives.

(Reprinted from the *Osservatore Romano*, English Edition, May 31, 1982.)

To reach that unity

Below some experiences shared during the Congress:

Father Paolo Raab, a Divine Word Missionary priest, told of his experience as rector of a seminary in Brazil.

"Like many other seminaries, ours went through a severe crisis: some of the students left to try and see what life would be like in a 'small community,' the professors had no more work, most of the brothers either left religious life or were transferred elsewhere.

"When the Father Provincial appointed me rector of the seminary, I asked him whether it was the case to sell or demolish the building. His answer stunned me: 'No,' he said, 'you must start all over again.' I left the parish where I had been assigned and took up this new responsibility.

"We were only a handful at first; the house resembled a huge, empty mausoleum. Some of the students who had tried small 'small community' living returned but, then they left again. The first year was a very painful one.

"At the end of the year, with the few who had remained in the seminary, I decided to participate in a Mariapolis at Sorocaba. I thought that it might be helpful for them; but instead, I was the one who returned home deeply touched. I had discovered a spirituality which resolved my many personal problems, as well as the sad situation of our community. I decided to keep in touch with other priests of the Movement.

"At that same time, another priest who also worked in spiritual formation returned from Europe where he had participated in the Movement's seminars for priests held in Grottaferrata. Although we had been friends before, from that moment on, our relationship took on a whole new dimension: we resolved to do everything — even the most insignificant tasks — with Jesus in our midst. Little by little,



Father Paolo Raab, S.V.D.

almost the entire community was drawn into this new way of life. Each week we would meet for meditation on a sentence from the Gospel, and the following week, we would share how we had put it into practice. We prepared ourselves in this way to share the experience of our life with those who would eventually join us. And in fact, our new novices (at first there were only three) immediately felt part of our small community. Among them too, unity became a daily experience.

"In the past, there had been a cold atmosphere in our seminary. To offset this impression, we resolved to do everything possible for those who came to visit us. When someone arrived, we would prepare his room with great care, and leave everything aside in order to keep him company. Gradually, a new trust in both the seminary and the congregation developed.

"In 1975, the meeting of our Provincials was held in our house. They too were deeply touched by the com-

munity spirit they found. From then on, the Father General recounted what he had seen in our community wherever he went.

"Two years later he asked me to become the rector of our permanent house of formation located in Nemi, Italy. At that time he said, 'We have many specialists in group dynamics in Nemi; there are many beautiful conferences there on community life. You are not a specialist, but you have participated in a concrete experience of this kind.' "

Father Franc Prelc from Portorose, Yugoslavia, shared his experience:

"From my very first contacts with the Focolare Movement, I too wanted to strive to possess the 'precious pearl' which is the presence of Jesus among two or more united in his name. Every week, I would spend at least one day with other priests who share this spirituality in order to learn how to be 'one' as Jesus wants.

"Thirteen years ago, my bishop asked me to move to a resort area and serve in two local parishes. After some time, a priest who was rather ill was sent to join me and I welcomed him with joy. A short time passed and a second priest was sent to live with me, this time it was a paralyzed priest.

"The three of us built a profound relationship of unity with one another. We became a real 'family.' This made it possible for another priest, then seventy-five years old, to join us. Our bishop was greatly consoled by this experience because he found in our community the solution to the long-held problem of elderly priests.

"Last year an eighty-one year old priest from a nearby parish, who otherwise would have had to live in a home for the elderly, came to live in our house. The family we



*Father Irenée,
O.C.S.O.*

form together has become an example also for our parishioners. Our life is not always easy, our personalities are very different, but precisely these differences enable us to enrich one another. They are also the guarantee that the basis of our unity truly is Christ."

Brother Valeriano Maragno, a Josephite brother, told how his encounter with the spirituality of unity has affected his life as a religious:

"My congregation was founded by Saint Leonard Murialdo for the education of young, homeless children. The encounter with the Focolare Movement before my novitiate strengthened my commitment to consecrate my life to God. The more I tried to live this spirituality of unity, the more the appreciation for what my founder had left us grew, as well as my desire to know him more deeply. I began to study his writings and I understood that, in order to be a Josephite brother, I needed to have the same love for young people he had had — and would have today — were he in my place..."

In this spirit, Brother Valeriano for several years has been providing many homeless boys in Padova with housing, work and the warmth of a family. Fifty young boys now live in "family-homes," similar to those established by the founder in his day and age. A medical-psychological team from public assistance provides help in more difficult cases.

"My superiors," Brother Valeriano concluded, "whole-heartedly support this work as an expression of our founder's charism, and

they have indicated it to all our communities as an example to follow."

Father Jose Lessa from Rio de Janeiro: "I was entrusted with a huge parish on the outskirts of a city. I found all the problems common to city parishes — social injustice, drugs, violence, prostitution . . . It was enough to overwhelm me, to make me plunge into frantic activism. But I resisted this temptation, and tried to keep up with a weekly appointment I had made with colleagues who shared the spirituality of the Focolare Movement. Unity with them gave me the force and serenity necessary to confront problems which at times seemed staggering. Alone I would never have made it . . ."

Father Agostino Amatori and Father Romano Nicolini from a parish in Rimini, Italy, shared their experience:

Father Agostino: "For twenty years, I served as pastor in the parish located in the heart of Rimini."

Father Romano: "I was pastor in a parish located on the outskirts of the same city, when in 1975, my bishop asked me to leave my small community and be assistant pastor to Father Agostino. I accepted willingly. I was then thirty-five years old, and he was fifty-three. The life of our small community of two, based on brotherly collaboration, helped us to understand that the juridical roles of pastor and assistant pastor were secondary to the fact that we were both priests."

Father Agostino: "One evening, in a moment of true spiritual unity, we realized that it would be better

for us and for the parish, if we exchanged roles. Romano would become the pastor — I, the assistant pastor. This idea seemed to us to be an inspiration; we presented it to the bishop who accepted and encouraged our suggestion. Some months later, I prepared my resignation in writing in favor of Father Romano whom I considered to be more fit for the responsibilities of the parish."

Father Romano: "This exchange was simple and natural because it was the fruit of mutual love. The parishioners, too, received it in the same spirit. The presence of Father Agostino, his age and experience continued to be a gift for all."

Father Agostino: "The relationship of unity that we have been trying to maintain has clarified also how to handle the financial aspect of our lives and of the parish; that is, what we need and what we don't need. The roles have changed but Jesus has remained in our midst: Only this matters because it is he who in this way continues to evangelize."

"What can the Work of Mary offer a Trappist Monk?"

Father Irenée comes from the Trappist monastery of Timadeuc in France. He told us: "The charism of unity has deepened our choice of God; it has illuminated and enriched our life as Cistercian monks — a life which is intensely community-oriented. The discovery of Jesus Crucified and Forsaken has revealed unimagined depths in our life. In him, the 'bitter things' of life, as St. Benedict calls them, take on a new light: the separation from the world is Him, the perpetual silence is Him, the solitude of the heart is Him, the austerity of cloistered life, Him, it is always Him, the Forsaken One...."

Twenty-two years at the service of unity

by Enzo Fondi

The Focolare Movement in Holland

A recent gathering in Amsterdam focused on the spiritual renewal offered by the Focolare Movement which, from the early 1960's, has witnessed the complex and painful experience of the Church in Holland.

The first steps taken in Holland were encouraging for the members of the Focolare who were then visiting from Belgium. Immediately they were received with a spirit of great openness by the Dutch, a people whom they found to be sincere, demanding and efficient. Cardinal Alfrink, and all the Dutch bishops, welcomed the Movement into their dioceses and encouraged its development. It was then the start of the Sixties.

The first men's Focolare Center was opened in February 1961 in Nijmegen, for "there," the Cardinal said, "the future of the country is being formed." And it was right there, at the Catholic University of Nijmegen, that the first Dutch to become focolarini met the Movement. One year later, the first Women's Focolare Center was opened at Eindhoven, and in 1968, a Mariapolis' was held at Stevensbeek: 250 persons attended. Thus was planted the tiny seed of a big tree, a tree which was still young when the strong winds following the Second Vatican Council began to shake the established, traditional structures.

The focolarini did not pretend to be blind, but reacted in line with their style of life. The tree did not break — because it had learned to bend. In fact, for those who love, before defending ideas, there is one's neighbor to serve as they tried to make themselves one. They learned how to face the moments

when it was necessary to go against the trend which the world around them would take. If in Holland this period proved to be more difficult than elsewhere, in the final analysis, the challenge remained the same: it was a matter of having courage and remaining faithful to a way of life which sought to be a concrete expression of the Gospel. Such a way of life — precisely because "evangelical" — would not be imposed on others: No extremism, therefore; no judgment of the others, no false pacifism, nor fanatic zeal but rather, the daily effort of putting the Gospel into practice. The sincerity and faithfulness of those committed to this way of life, reflected qualities which the Dutch people treasured deeply.

"So that you might be accepted by God, you have merited to be tempted" (cf. Tob. 12:13). It was a sentence which reflected the historical moment lived by the Church in Holland. These words held recognition not only of the past witness given to the faith, but also of a real hope for the future. It is God who gives and God who takes away: This was true also for the thousands of vocations, the ardent piety and splendor of Catholic institutions, the solidity of faith.

Today, it would be both rash and misleading were we to weigh the scales of faith in Holland solely according to sociological criteria — just as it would be for every national or ecclesial community. More

than the statistics, it is the "quality" of faith that counts. I will give two examples taken from personal experience.

Bernard and Ineke, a young Dutch couple who belong to the Reformed Calvinist Church, are members of the Focolare Movement (which includes approximately 200 members from the Protestant community). The Reformed Church in Holland, it must not be forgotten, gave a decisive imprint to the national identity. Bernard and Ineke, with their children, are a family of so-called "leaders" having responsibility to help other families of the parish community who live in the area. Their gatherings focus on the



Consulate General of the Netherlands



Above: Chiara Lubich answering questions during the meeting of members and friends of the Focolare Movement.

Below: A partial view of the 1,600 participants, representative of the 10,000 members and friends of the Movement in the Netherlands. The meeting took place in Amsterdam's International Center.

Opposite page: Fields of cultivated flowers. Due to its sandy soil, particularly suited to the cultivation of flowers, Holland is able to export its famous bulbs all over the world.

Previous page: Holland is famous for its windmills, one of the more ingenious discoveries of the Dutch in their continuous reclamation and drainage of land. When the windmill is in motion, it activates pumps which draw water out from the lowlands, thereby drying large tracks of land called "polders."

"Word of Life" which is a sort of "rediscovery" of the Gospel, also for many belonging to the Reformed Church.

"Before, I only knew God the Father. Now it seems to me that I have come to know another 'countenance' of God," Bernard shared with me. "He is also mother to me." And when I asked, "Do you think the Movement is Dutch?" Ineke responded promptly with the frankness typical of the Dutch: "I don't know if it is Dutch, but it is certainly made for the Dutch!"

I also remember vividly an evening I spent on the outskirts of Amsterdam. About twenty young people had gathered to share in that unique experience of profound prayer and communion which is the Mass celebrated among persons who have given God the first place in their life and try to live the commandment of





mutual love. I experienced a sense of spiritual fullness, maturity, faith, simplicity and peace. These persons, I thought, are the Church of tomorrow. In the seed, one already sees the tree. The Church is always living, always new, already completely present, even within the four walls of a room: not the number, but the power of the Holy Spirit, makes the Church.

Family reunion

At Amsterdam's Center for international congresses, 1,600 people gathered for a special meeting.

The audience was not the usual mixture of professionals and economists who meet regularly at the Center. It was a public made up of young and old, priests, religious men and women, entire families, from both the Catholic and Reformed Churches. They came from Frisia and Brabante, from Groningen and Maastricht, from Rotterdam and Eindhoven, from The Hague and Utrecht. There were engineering students from Delft, professors from the University of Nijmegen, priests from Haarlem and families from Leyden.

More than ten years have passed since a meeting of this size was held in Holland. Usually two or three smaller gatherings are held simultaneously each year, thus keeping the

meetings — as the Dutch much prefer — “family size.”

But this Sunday was truly a day for the whole Focolare family to rejoice together. The crowd seemed a mere handful of persons, given the silence that reigned in the hall as highlights of Chiara Lubich's trip to Asia and Australia were presented. The program had begun at 11:00 in the morning, but by 4:00 in the afternoon, no one appeared the least bit tired: on the contrary, the interest seemed to grow as time went on.

Cardinal Willebrands, primate of the Church in Holland, sent a message welcoming Chiara to Holland, and expressing his gratitude for all that the Movement has done to “keep the inspiration of the faith alive in so many.”

Pronuncio Bishop Bruno Wustenberg, in his brief talk in Dutch, expressed the personal interest of Pope John Paul II.

Chiara spoke then to the community about the central theme of the Movement's spirituality: Unity. She retraced the main steps in the formation of the Movement's way of life focusing on Jesus' priestly prayer: “Father, that all may be one, as you and I are one” (Jn. 17:21).

Referring to the earliest days of the Movement, Chiara shared with all how, little by little, through experience and inspiration, the initial

ideas on unity took shape. She drew from some of the letters from this period, their words charged with this “discovery” of unity:

“You can experience unity, ‘see’ it, delight in it... but it cannot be described! All rejoice when there is unity; all suffer when there is not. It is peace, joy, love, ardor... it leads you to the greatest generosity. It is Jesus in our midst!”

This then was the secret to true unity which Chiara proposed to the Dutch people: to keep — through constant mutual love — the presence of the Risen Lord in their midst. She concluded with the suggestion of what could be the Movement's specific contribution to the country and Church which the Dutch people love so much.

This demanding and generous contribution could be to bring the presence of Love into Holland's families and homes, offices and schools, parishes and associations.

The crowd filling the hall, down to the young boys seated all around the foot of the stage, was extremely attentive and silent. At the end, a thunderous applause burst forth — an explosion of joy and consensus. Here too I experienced a sense of family: one family in Holland, the Philippines, Korea, Australia...

1) Annual gathering of the Focolare Movement.

Remembering a friend of the Focolare:

John Cardinal Cody, Archbishop of Chicago

by Sharry Silvi

Many articles have been written about Cardinal Cody after his death. The press has given wide coverage to his funeral, reporting on the more than 40,000 persons who filed into Chicago's Holy Name Cathedral to pay him their last respects, as well as on the outpouring of sympathy from all over.

Once the Cardinal had said that, when he retired, he would write his own story: the one that was true. But he did not reach retirement, and others have recorded the facts of his life: his birth in St. Louis, Missouri, his studies at the North American College in Rome and his ordination there in 1931, his appointment to the staff of the Vatican Secretariat of State under two prelates later to become Pope Pius XII and Pope Paul VI, and his subsequent consecration as bishop in 1947. When he arrived in Chicago in 1967, he was already well known for his sustained defense of civil rights in the South.

We leave to others the task of defining the stature of this personality of the Church, a figure whom Pope John Paul II briefly but masterfully described in his message delivered by Cardinal Baum at the funeral:

"The Holy Father . . . is giving glory to God for the great accomplishments achieved by God's grace through the priestly and episcopal ministry of Cardinal Cody . . . is grateful for his complete dedication to Our Lord and to His Church, for his concern for . . . the rights and dignity of all human beings, for his great zeal for the sacred liturgy, for his compassion and concern for his brother priests, for his tender love and devotion to the Holy Mother of

our Savior . . . for his devotion, his fidelity to the Holy See and to the person of the Bishop of Rome, Successor of Peter . . ."

Others will detail the achievements of this "tireless worker and leader in the mission of the Gospel," as Terence Cardinal Cooke, Archbishop of New York, described him.

We, instead, would like to speak of the Cardinal as we knew him: a great friend of the Focolare Movement.

"Magnificat anima mea" (My being proclaims the greatness of the Lord) was the motto chosen for his episcopal coat of arms. Perhaps it was his deep love for Mary which drew him to love the Work of Mary, as the Focolare Movement is called.

His first encounter with the Movement dates back to the days when he worked at the Vatican Secretariat of State. To a large group gathered for a Mini-Mariapolis¹ in Chicago in 1981, he recounted:

"I learned about the Focolare Movement, believe it or not, many, many years ago . . . from a Pope who was then my boss, Msgr. Montini. I was very close to him . . . and I remember more than once how he was inspired by what was being proposed in this Movement . . ."

"The Church was his life" a newspaper wrote, and his love for the Church he always shared with us. He told members of the Movement in 1968 for instance:

(There are) "prejudices . . . criticisms, within and without the Church . . . doubts being cast upon everything that the Church does or says . . . defections . . . Does one per-

haps see another sad page of persecution, of disunity within the Church? We hope it will not be so.

"But this can be stopped if each and every one of you who is proud to call the Church your own, instead of listening to this criticism . . . counteracts it with the spirit of love, helping the Church to bring about renewal within and without."

He made the Pope very present to all. "We all love the Pope," the Cardinal said in the 1975 Mariapolis² in

Pennsylvania. "He is thousands of miles away from us, and yet he is present with us here this morning, in the spirit of love for all his children."

In the same meeting, he had given the special blessing of the Pope to all.

"Some years ago I had an audience with the Holy Father, Pope Paul VI," he said. "I told him what a consolation it would be for thousands and thousands of Catholics if I could say to them: 'I bring you a greeting from Christ's Vicar on earth' . . . He gave me permission to give his blessing when I thought it opportune . . . Certainly (he granted) this out of love. . . for you and I can attest," he added with a smile, "out of love for the Focolare Movement."

Directly he met the Focolare through Chiara Lubich, its founder in 1965, in Rome. From that point on, he followed the Movement's every step ahead, always encouraging us, rejoicing with us over each new development.

It was shortly before his death that he heard about Chiara Lubich's trip to Tokyo and the sharing of her



Christian experience with 12,000 Buddhists³ in a meeting which he called "historical." He told us on that occasion: "May Our Lady continue to bless you, especially in this new phase of your apostolate of dialogue with other religions, a dialogue which is so important to the Church today."

Very relevant he had also thought to be the fact that the 1977 Templeton Prize for Religion had been awarded to the foundress of the Focolare, especially considering the impact it would have on ecumenism. In fact, the ecumenical movement would always remain one of the concerns closest to the Cardinal's heart.

He expressed his love for the Focolare on many occasions and with many people. He would often remember us during his travels. In February 1981, he wrote to us from Anchorage, Alaska where he had gone to greet the Pope then returning from Japan: "Greetings from the 'Top of the World!' The focolarini are needed here!"

Certainly the most beautiful moment of his life came when Pope John Paul II visited Chicago in 1979.

I was present in Chicago's Holy Name Cathedral the day when,

Cardinal Cody at the Mariapolis of Loretto, Pennsylvania in 1975.

amidst the seemingly endless applause, Pope John Paul II and the Cardinal entered together. I had never seen him so beaming. "... the Pope felt at home," he would write us several days later. And with that personal touch so typical of him, he added: "The Holy Father was very happy with the surprise encounter he had with the gen⁴ on Saturday morning" (with the Cardinal's help, the gen had been able to wait in his front yard for the passage of the Pope); "he even took their flowers along with him on the plane."

In Chicago, he had given us the use of several buildings. One of them was the Mariapolis Center⁵ where he came to visit many times. There, on New Year's Day 1981, the Cardinal celebrated Mass for a group of gen who had come from all over North America. He then answered their questions for two and a half hours. It was a special moment, a festive occasion. A group picture was taken with the Cardinal and later he sent one to each gen with a personal note.

In these last years, he often spent at least one day of the Christmas

holiday with us. On December 24, 1979, as he began the homily of the Mass, he confided the reason for his presence among us: "I am very happy to be here today because I love you all. Everything of you is of interest to me."

But it was at the 1981 Mini-Mariapolis in Chicago that the Cardinal opened his heart and shared in the deepest way his esteem and love for the Movement. Among other things he said:

"If there ever was a time (to spread) a message like Chiara's ... it is in our day ... Why did you come here tonight? Why are you interested in the Focolare Movement? Because you too have felt something that inspired you ... like me. As it has been said this evening, I am one of the best friends that the Focolare has.

"I always recall a saying by Tertullian, one of the Fathers of the Church: 'Look how they love one another.' That is the message of the Focolare Movement that you have heard ... now go out and practice." And then, to ease the emotion of the moment which had taken hold



Above: The Cardinal greeting Diane Rodriguez, a gen from Puerto Rico after the Mass celebrated at the Mariapolis Center in Chicago during the 1981 Gen II girls congress.

Below: Gen from all over North America listening to the Cardinal answering their questions during the same congress.

of the audience, the Cardinal concluded, as he so often did, on a lighthearted note: "Now I have been asked to give you the blessing. I'll give it in Latin: it sounds more authentic!"

In December 1981 at the time of his Golden Jubilee as a priest, the Focolare was celebrating its Twentieth Anniversary in North America.⁶ He desired to participate in the events planned for Chicago, presiding at the Mass commemorating not only our first twenty years here, but also the anniversary of Chiara Lubich's consecration to God.

Also the concert given by Gen Verde⁷ at Chicago's Drury Lane Theatre he included in his busy schedule of those days. Seated next to us he confided, "I rested all day in order to be able to be here tonight."

I will not easily forget the moment when, at the end of the first half of the program the Cardinal, moving with great effort, reached the stage, "Not to sing or dance," he said jokingly, "but to say a few words to you all." After remembering his long-held friendship with the Focolare Movement, he thanked everyone, concluding with a sentence which seemed to foreshadow the future: "I have now heard all of the best choirs in the world: the Sistine Chapel Choir in the Vatican, the Pauline Chapel Choir, the Gen Verde. And all that remains for me now, is to hear the Choir of Angels."

1, 2) One day and week-long gatherings of the Focolare Movement, respectively.

3) Members of the lay Buddhist association, the Rissho Kosei-kai. See *Living City*, Volume 21, No. 3.

4) See inside back cover.

5) Mariapolis Centers serve for the formation of members and friends of the Focolare Movement.

6) See *Living City*, Volume 21, No. 2.

7) Gen Verde is a musical group, one of the many expressions of the Focolare Movement.

WORD OF LIFE

AUGUST

**"Nothing
that goes into a man
from outside
can make him unclean;
it is the things
that come out of a man
that make him unclean."**

(Mk. 7:15)

"Nothing that goes into a man from outside can make him unclean; it is the things that come out of a man that make him unclean" (Mk. 7:15).

Jesus made this statement while speaking to a crowd. Later, when his disciples questioned him about what he meant, he explained that food could not possibly cause moral impurity because it affects us only on the physiological plane.

Consequently, there are no such things as "unclean" foods; that is, foods which can contaminate people, making them impure and thus incapable of drawing close to God. Eating specific foods has nothing to do with purity in the moral and religious sense.

"Nothing that goes into a man from outside can make him unclean; it is the things that come out of a man that make him unclean."

The position which Jesus took was then quite courageous considering the dietary restrictions observed by the Jews.

Jesus, however, considering all of creation as good, put an end to the distinction between "clean" and "unclean" animals and to the consequent dietary laws. Open to all humanity, Jesus removed an impediment which could have alienated the pagan world from the first Christian community.

"... it is the things that come out of a man that make him unclean."

The second part of this word of life deals with that which really makes us unclean. It is from the depths of the heart that evil thoughts and intentions emerge. And Jesus cites them: "fornication, theft, murder, adultery, greed,

maliciousness, deceit, sensuality, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, an obtuse spirit" (cf. Mk. 7:21).

"Nothing that goes into a man from outside can make him unclean; it is the things that come out of a man that make him unclean."

The first part of Jesus' message as explained above, may no longer apply to our life today. Christianity, in fact, has abolished the distinction between pure and impure foods thus anchoring moral decisions to one's conscience and "interiorizing" religion. It is nevertheless certainly necessary in our day to be reminded that the human heart has the inclination to generate evil thoughts and selfish desires. Where do the many evils like terrorism, hedonism and thievery come from? Where do kidnappings, frauds, acts of revenge, rivalries, murders and many other calamities of our age come from if not from the heart of our fellow human beings?

Jesus views creation as good and knows full well that the human person was created in God's image and likeness. He also knows human nature, however, and the human tendency towards evil; thus he demands that we convert.

This emerges clearly from the words we are considering. He wants to create in us a pure and sincere heart which, like a clear spring, will give rise to good thoughts and blameless actions.

"Nothing that goes into a man from outside can make him unclean; it is the things that come out of a man that make him unclean."

How then can we live these words?

If it is not the food and the other material things that come to us from our surroundings that make us unclean and separate us from friendship with God, but rather our own self — our own heart, and decisions — then it is obvious that Jesus wants us to reflect on the true motives behind our actions and behavior.

And we know that for Jesus, only love can purify everything we do.

One who loves, does not sin or kill, or speak ill of others, or steal or betray...

So then, let us be guided twenty-four hours a day by love: love for God and for our neighbors. We will then be true Christians.

Chiara Lubich

SEPTEMBER

**"And if your foot
should cause you to sin,
cut it off;**

**It is better for you to enter into
life lame, than to have two feet
and be thrown into Gehenna."**

(Mk. 9:45)

This word of life contains one of three similar recommendations that Jesus makes, referring first of all to the hand, then to the foot, and lastly to the eye. Clearly these words are not meant to be taken literally. Jesus is certainly not suggesting that we mutilate ourselves. He simply wants to tell us that, when faced with something which could be an occasion of serious sin, we should be ready to let go of everything, including persons and things dear to

us, rather than risk the loss of the greatest good of all: salvation. Compared to this, all material goods are nothing! The fact that Jesus insists upon this point, repeating it three times, reveals how uncompromising he wants us to be in making moral decisions.

"And if your foot should cause you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life lame, than to have two feet and be thrown into Gehenna."

"...better for you to enter life..."

Not to enter into life, that is, the eternal life of God, not to share in his kingdom, is to have failed completely as a human being: earthly life loses all sense, and the death of the body brings eternal death as well — total failure for one who as a human being was created to live forever.

"And if your foot should cause you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life lame, than to have two feet and be thrown into Gehenna."

"... than to have two feet and be thrown into Gehenna."

"Gehenna" is the name of a valley found at the foot of Mount Sion. At one time, human sacrifices were performed there as part of an idolatrous cult. The prophet Jeremiah felt the place was accursed and, for a number of reasons, the valley soon came to be considered a place of torment into which all evildoers would be thrown, or even the entrance to hell. For Jesus, "Gehenna" is synonymous with hell.

"And if your foot should cause you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life lame, than to have two feet and be thrown into Gehenna."

How then can we live this word of life?

Jesus speaks of the eye, hand and foot, saying that they can be occasions of sin.

We know, for example, that we can use our eye to look at other people's belongings or even at people themselves with the desire to possess them. The early Christians put these extraordinarily strong words of Jesus into practice avoiding at any cost the sin of adultery.

The hand can be used to steal that which belongs to another, for example.

The foot can bring you to places which should be absolutely avoided because they lead to sin.

Jesus, in citing such important and precious members of the human body — the eye, hand and foot — is saying that no sacrifice is too great if it prevents the loss of communion with God.

Therefore, let us cut with every attachment of our heart to all that we should not desire.

We cannot follow Jesus if we do not deny ourselves and love our own cross. A Christian cannot be half-hearted: a Christian must be resolute.

And, in carrying out Jesus' commands we will see that even the slightest sacrifice incurred, will be rewarded. For everything we let go of or we renounce, we will experience joy, the true joy which the world does not know because its source is in Heaven.

Just as every pruning produces new life in a plant, every time Christians give something up out of love for Christ they experience a new burst of happiness.

During this month let us courageously do away with everything which should not be in our heart. Heaven then will be ours in a few years; ours the experience of the fullness of peace in this life.

CHIARA LUBICH

Experiences

THE DECISION TO BE 'ONE'

I was having difficulty meeting some financial obligations, so I decided to take on a part-time job, in addition to my work as an elementary school teacher. For awhile it was exciting, but as time went on, the pressures became too much: I became physically and emotionally drained and, worst of all, the children suffered from my impatience and lack of preparation.

The word of life that month was, "For the weak I made myself weak. I made myself all things to all men in order to save some at any cost." After reading the commentary, I understood that the extra job was keeping me from making myself 'one' with my students. I had to accept my own weakness in the fact that I couldn't handle so many things at the same time.

Shortly after, a publishing company asked me to help prepare a Teacher's Manual. I was flattered to be offered this opportunity, but after taking time to discuss how much work was involved, I again felt I had to say 'no,' accepting my own weakness so that I could serve the 'weak' entrusted to me.

In one of my classes there are three children who were having a hard time doing their work well and learning new concepts. I found myself being impatient and demanding of them. Then one day I thought of the word of life, "For the weak I made myself weak. I made myself all things to all men in order to save some at any cost." I began to take some extra time to help them, praising them for the good I saw in their work, and asking questions I knew they could answer. Soon they each became more conscientious, they smiled more often, and began doing much better work. That was the "hundredfold."

B. H.



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(see inside back cover)

(continued from page 12)

the right to continue to make his pastoral contribution according to his possibilities, and to be appreciated for the truly high, unique value that is his — that of his suffering."

It is the highest form of asceticism, but an asceticism with far-reaching consequences on the practical plane as well. For the priests who live this way "every trace of individualism, or spiritual pride" disappears because what matters is God, love and unity."

In regard to the religious, Father Andrea Balbo, a Franciscan, presented an equally clear analysis of the crisis, which reflects the tensions, perplexities and anxieties of society-at-large, added to the small and great crosses that are part of religious life of all times.

Vatican II had called for a renewal — a return to the evangelical sources, to the genuine spirit of the founders, to a translation of timeless values into expressions, forms and structures that are new and in keeping with today's life and culture.

"The difficulties and sufferings experienced within religious institutions today, as they have tried to answer this call, are manifold." There are those who feel they have lost their identity, others who embrace bold initiatives for change; and often superiors themselves are doubtful as to which road to follow. These are basic trials touching "the very being of religious as consecrated persons, their vocation, the motive for all their choices." Community life, the rule, everything is open for discussion and cause for conflict, "for secularism, which has removed the cross from the Gospel, has undermined these aspects of religious life at their root."

Given this context, Father Balbo pointed out, the encounter of the

religious — for whom the cross has always been the focal point — with the spirituality of the Focolare Movement, has proven to be very meaningful. Its spirituality, in fact "focuses on Jesus Crucified, in the mystery of his abandonment — the culmination of his physical and spiritual suffering — as the key to understand and transform every situation."

Jesus Crucified and Forsaken — the man of sorrow — is God, and therefore light, love, the way, fullness of life, harmony, unity between past and present, creativity. To recognize in every suffering his presence which generates new life, transforms all the crises of religious life, Father Balbo explained, from crises of death and decay into turning points of new life and growth.

Each religious family which recognizes and embraces Jesus Forsaken in every suffering will blossom with new life, becoming once more a "Word of God" proclaimed to the world.

The result of this way of life will be documented, Father Balbo said, by experiences recounted throughout the convention about tensions resolved, the sense of family strengthened, personal and community problems solved or being solved, communities on the verge of disintegration becoming once more dynamic centers which irradiate spiritual vitality.

"The community," said Father Balbo, "is not reduced to a means to make religious more efficient in their apostolate, or only to a way to find mutual support. The community becomes a 'family of God' " in the image of the Trinity and therefore "a sign of the Church where the communion among members is a communion of saints" because the people forming it "do not lean on one another, but are able to remain standing on their own feet because

Jesus Crucified and Forsaken is their Spouse."

Jesus Forsaken, Father Balbo continued, helps one to live chastity in the midst of our hedonistic society, to be complete and fulfilled. Jesus Forsaken helps one to live poverty, gives the taste of true freedom. In "knowing that we are children of God, everything that is His, is ours." He frees one from that knowledge which inflates the ego, and from attachment to the material means we need to use. He helps one to be obedient and go beyond the 'authority versus subject' conflict; one comes to "instinctively seek the will of the Father."

Finally, Jesus Forsaken leads religious to unity with their superiors, teaching them to understand that when they listen to them, they listen to Him, even when the dialogue should become difficult. And in the Rule, the will of God is rediscovered.

Jesus Crucified and Forsaken, "contains," in the words of Chiara Lubich, "the synthesis of all the commandments and counsels of the Gospel." In the mystery of Jesus Forsaken all spiritualities find their fullest expression once more: the poverty of St. Francis, the obedience of St. Ignatius, the "work and prayer" of St. Benedict. He is the model for the Dominicans "because it is in that moment that Jesus expresses and gives the whole truth." A spirituality focusing on Jesus Forsaken "penetrates all the others, leading them back, when necessary, to their true purpose, to the charism of the founder, leading each of the disciples to understand his own teacher" and Rule.

Thus, Jesus Crucified and Forsaken "becomes the key to unity even among all the charisms which God has placed in his Church." He is the answer for which today's world, in its quest for a renewed inner unity, is so anxiously searching.

What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

The Focolare Movement began in 1943, in Italy. Chiara Lubich, with a small group of girls, realized in the midst of the total destruction of World War II, that God is the only one worth living for. Hence they began to place the Gospel in the center of their lives. The testament of Jesus became their Ideal: "That all may be one . . . that the world may know that you have sent me, and that you have loved them as you have loved me . . ." (Jn.17:23). The life lived by these first girls, the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to a form of spirituality proper to the Focolare Movement. It represents a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

The name "Focolarini" takes its origin from the Italian word "fire" and suggests the idea of "carriers of fire."

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. They work as other lay men and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini."

THE VOLUNTEERS

The Volunteers, who are also called the "Volunteers of God," would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. For this reason they remain in their jobs and in their professions in order to vivify them with this spirit.

Their aim is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

THE LARGEST MEMBERSHIP

The largest membership of the Movement is made up of men, women, and young people of all social conditions who are free of any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their free and willing acceptance of its spirit. They keep in touch with the Movement and with one another through large or small gatherings, publications, correspondence, and personal contact.

People with other commitments, even those bound to religious institutions, can form part of the Movement too because the Movement exists wherever its spirit is lived. People of non-Christian religions are also counted among the Movement's friends. Also those who owe no allegiance to any faith are often attracted by one or another of the Movement's aspects.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation.

Thousands of young people all over the world have been attracted by the spirituality of unity. Their number continues to grow.

At the core of this large group of youth, are Gen who have committed themselves to living the Gospel message of love. The Gen use all possible means to share with other youth the conviction they have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the motive for everything they do.

NEW!

DIARY OF FIRE



DIARY OF FIRE

Igino Giordani

Igino Giordani was a person who lived life to the full and who enriched the lives of countless others. He was born in Tivoli, Italy, on September 24, 1894. From humble beginnings as a bricklayer's apprentice at the age of twelve, he rose to become one of Italy's foremost twentieth-century writers.

In the mid 1920's, while in New York studying at Columbia University, Giordani, a Catholic, had his first significant contacts with representatives of various other Christian traditions and immediately recognized the necessity of creating an ecumenical consciousness among Catholics and of fostering mutual understanding among Christians. To this end he worked untiringly for the next fifty-five years.

During World War II, when *Diary of Fire* begins, Giordani was actively engaged with his close friend DeGasperi and other anti-Fascist leaders in formulating plans for a new and just political order for postwar Italy. After the war he was elected to the Italian parliament.

In 1948, Giordani met the Focolare Movement and was struck by the witness of unity he saw among its members. It seemed to him that the Focolare had a gift for bringing about unity, which included healing the separation between the lay and religious vocations. Indeed, soon he became the first married person to consecrate himself to God in this new lay movement.

The remaining thirty years of his life were tirelessly dedicated to the Focolare Movement: as editor of its magazine, *Città Nuova*; director of its ecumenical center, Centro Uno; one of the directors of its international institute of spiritual formation. He also authored many books and articles that embody the Focolare spirituality.

In the spring of 1980, at the age of eighty-five, Igino Giordani left this life.

Diary of Fire is the personal record of his life, of his own spiritual "adventure." Through this diary we are afforded the opportunity of sharing the spiritual journey of one whom Chiara Lubich, the foundress of the Focolare Movement, described as a "great soul, always open to humanity," and whom Pope John XXIII called a "shining light."

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